



F-35 Lightning II Program

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VMFA-121 conducts hot reloads

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan -- Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121 conducted hot-reload exercises at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, April 6, 2017.

This signified the first time the squadron loaded ordnance onto a running F-35B Lightning II aircraft at the air station in order to prepare for real-world scenarios.

"We concentrated less on time today and more on execution of procedures," said Maj. Adam Perlin, aircraft maintenance officer for VMFA-121. "We went step-by-step ensuring all the correct precautions were taken and getting every detail right."

The safety of Marines during the training was emphasized through procedures the squadron has in place.

"I filled the billet as a quality assurance safety officer," said Sgt. John Page, ordnance technician with VMFA-121. "I witnessed the bombs being loaded in a safe manner on the aircraft. Anytime we do training like this, we have to safeguard the Marines and equipment."

While the Marines played their part in the exercise, the aircraft also played its part with its engines still turning.



A Marine with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121 salutes a pilot during hot-reload training at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, April 6, 2017. This signified the first time the squadron loaded ordnance onto a running F-35B Lightning II aircraft at the air station in order to prepare for real-world scenarios.



Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121 load ordnance on an F-35B Lightning II aircraft during hot-reload training at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, April 6, 2017. This signified the first time the squadron loaded ordnance onto a running F-35B Lightning II aircraft at the air station in order to prepare for real-world scenarios.

"I was the pilot today," said Perlin. "I made sure the aircraft was set up to receive the ordnance, made sure the ordnance was loaded correctly and made sure the aircraft accepted the load so I could deploy the bomb if necessary."

Perlin added that executing the training helped build a knowledge basis and proficiency for the ordnance Marines and the aircrew. He added that it is vital to improving as a squadron and continuing to move forward toward being ready when called upon to fight.

Performing training in new environments creates opportunities for Marines to learn new things and thrive in their location.

“Everybody did a great job,” said Page. “Those who were filling new billets were able to pull through and successfully complete their tasks with no mishaps.”

VMFA-121 plans to continue training and increase their readiness as a squadron.

“Little steps like what we did today are moving the entire program along,” said Perlin. “Conducting this training for the first time here in Iwakuni and making sure we get these things right enhances our capabilities as well as the Marine Corps’ capabilities as a whole.”



Ordnance sits on a loader during hot-reload training at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, April 6, 2017. This signified the first time the squadron loaded ordnance onto a running F-35B Lightning II aircraft at the air station in order to prepare for real-world scenarios.